

IMPROVING THE KEEPING QUALITY OF HOME-RENDERED LARD

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Why Better Keeping Quality Is Important

Lard is a high-energy food that is almost completely digestible and contains substances necessary for good nutrition. Strong (rancid) lard is unfit for food purposes. Not only is it unpalatable, but certain desirable food values have been destroyed. Moreover, such lard destroys essential vitamins in foods to which it is added. Since lard cannot be renovated easily after it becomes rancid, farmers or householders who store it for home use frequently suffer considerable loss through rancidity. Renovating treatments, such as cooking a few raw potatoes in the lard, may temporarily improve palatability, but they do not restore lost food values.

How To Improve The Keeping Quality Of Lard

Addition of 2 to 3 pounds of hydrogenated vegetable shortening² to 50 pounds of lard at the time of rendering affords an inexpensive and easy method of improving the keeping quality of home-rendered lard.³ Tests have shown that in most cases lard remains fresh approximately twice as long if treated in this way. This effect is due to an abundance of natural antioxidants in hydrogenated vegetable oils. The preferred procedure is to add the vegetable shortening to the rendered lard in the kettle just before settling and separating the cracklings in the lard press. Another procedure is to add the shortening

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² HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE SHORTENINGS ARE SOLD UNDER VARIOUS NAMES SUCH AS CAPITAL CITY, CREAM-WHITE, CRISCO, DEXO, SNOWDRIFT, AND SPRY. THIS LIST IS PROVIDED AS A PRACTICAL GUIDE AND IS NOT TO BE CONSTRUED AS AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE PRODUCTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. OTHER BRANDS MAY BE EQUAL OR SUPERIOR TO THOSE LISTED. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PRODUCT IS A HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE SHORTENING.

³ BASED IN PART ON THE RESULTS OF WORK BY THE EASTERN REGIONAL RESEARCH LABORATORY, PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN OIL CHEMISTS' SOCIETY (FORMERLY OIL AND SOAP), VOL. 21, P. 98 (1944).

to the melted lard in the storage container. If this is done, however, careful stirring until the vegetable shortening is entirely melted is necessary to assure thorough mixing with the lard. Moreover, in filling the container, allowance must be made for the volume of shortening to be added.

A convenient way to estimate the needed amount of hydrogenated vegetable shortening is to allow 2 pounds for each hog of average weight (250 pounds).

General Precautions In Rendering And Storing Lard

Preparation And Care Of The Fat

In order to prepare a lard of good keeping quality, the fat tissues should be rendered as promptly as possible after the carcass is thoroughly chilled, preferably within 24 hours. Since there is no satisfactory treatment for eliminating undesirable odors and flavors associated with fat from very old animals or from improperly prepared entrails, it is well to render such fat separately.

Rendering

Lard from home- or custom-butchered hogs is usually rendered in an iron kettle, which should be free of rust. It is preferable to start with a small quantity of fat, which can be stirred easily, and cook slowly. When this fat begins to melt, the remainder is added. Some, however, prefer to start with a small quantity of melted fat in the bottom of the kettle. Lard from the previous year's supply should never be used for this purpose, because it will make the entire batch more susceptible to rancidity. It would be much better to use a portion of the hydrogenated vegetable shortening.

Storage And Use

Tinned metal pails or cans of 5 to 50 pounds' capacity are recommended for storage of home-rendered lard. These should be in first-class condition, free of rust, and have tight fitting lids. Enamelware and crockery are usually not well suited for the purpose because they are difficult to seal tightly. Sometimes, however, if not enough tins are available, it is necessary to use other containers, such as glass fruit jars. If these are to be used, it is advisable to heat them in the oven until moderately hot before pouring in the hot rendered lard in order to lessen the danger of breakage. Lard stored in glass should be kept in a dark place. All containers should be filled as full as possible in order to lessen the air space in contact with the fat. Needless to say, the containers must always be thoroughly clean and dry before use. A cool dry place should be chosen for storing the lard.

When lard is removed from the container for cooking purposes, it should not be dug out but taken evenly from the top. In this way less fat surface is exposed to the harmful effect of air.

No known treatment will make lard permanently fresh. Addition of hydrogenated vegetable shortenings only helps to keep lard fresh for a longer time, all other things being equal. Hence the other precautions outlined here should be observed.